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TO: **W-2 Agencies**
Income Maintenance Supervisors
Income Maintenance Lead Workers
Income Maintenance Staff
Workforce Development Boards
Child Care Coordinators

FROM: Shawn Smith, Director
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Division of Health Care Access and
Accountability

Susan Mathison, Section Chief
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Division of Early Care and Education

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Division of Family and Economic Security

**BEPS/DECE/DFES OPERATIONS
MEMO**

No: 13-06

DATE: 04/02/2013

FS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	BC+	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
SC	<input type="checkbox"/>	CTS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	FSET	<input type="checkbox"/>
CC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	W-2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	EA	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
CF	<input type="checkbox"/>	JAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	JC	<input type="checkbox"/>
RAP	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	WIA	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
				EP	

PRIORITY: HIGH

SUBJECT: Earned Income, Homestead, and Other Tax Credits

CROSS REFERENCE: W-2 Manual, [Chapter 3](#)
[Wisconsin Shares Child Care Assistance Manual](#), 1.6.11
[BadgerCare Plus Handbook](#), 16.2
[Medicaid Handbook](#), Sections 15.4.20, 15.5, and 16.7.8
[Caretaker Supplement Handbook](#), 3.2
[FoodShare Handbook](#), Sections 4.3.2.2, 4.4.1.4, and 4.5.5

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

PURPOSE

This memo provides Tax Year 2012 information on tax credits and tax preparation services available to working families in Wisconsin and reminds Wisconsin Works (W-2) and Income Maintenance (IM) agencies of the importance of notifying program participants of the financial advantages of federal and state tax credits. This memo also provides a reminder on how to count federal and state tax refunds when determining financial eligibility for assistance.

BACKGROUND

There are a number of federal and state tax credits available to eligible working families that can reduce their tax burden and increase income. It is important to note that federal tax refunds will not disqualify working families from W-2 and FoodShare programs because it is disregarded income. This table provides a summary of the maximum amounts of tax credits that may be available to working individuals and families.

Summary Table of 2012 Maximum Tax Credits with Income Eligibility Limits

Number of Qualifying Children	Federal EITC	Wisconsin EIC (EITC)	EITC Income Limits (state and federal)	Wisconsin Homestead (HC)	WI HC Income Limits	Federal Child Tax Credit
Zero	Up to \$475	\$0	< \$13,980 < \$19,190 (Married)	Up to \$1,168	\$24,680	\$0
One	Up to \$3,169	Up to \$127	< \$36,920 < \$42,130 (Married)	Up to \$1,168	\$24,680	Up to \$1,000
Two	Up to \$5,236	Up to \$576	< \$41,952 < \$47,162 (Married)	Up to \$1,168	\$24,680	Up to \$2,000
Three or More	Up to \$5,891	Up to \$2,003	< \$45,060 < \$50,270 (Married)	Up to \$1,168	\$24,680	Up to \$1,000 per child

RELATED INCOME POLICIES

The Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010 requiring federally funded programs to disregard federal tax refunds as income and assets was set to expire on December 31, 2012. Under the Tax Relief Act of 2012 signed into law on January 2, 2013, the provision is permanently extended. Agencies must continue to follow current policy when counting state tax refunds.

W-2, Emergency Assistance, and Job Access Loans

W-2 agencies must continue to disregard the entire amount of any federal tax refunds as income in the month received and as an asset for 12 months from the date of receipt. If there is a remaining, unspent portion of the refund after the 12-month disregard period has passed, the agency must count that portion as an available asset.

Refugee Assistance Programs

W-2 agencies must continue to disregard federal income tax refunds as income in the month received and as an asset for 12 months following the month of receipt for Refugee Assistance programs.

Wisconsin Shares Child Care Assistance

Child Care agencies must continue to disregard the entire amount of all federal income tax refunds as income.

BadgerCare Plus

IM agencies must continue to disregard federal income tax refunds, rebates, and credits as income for the BadgerCare Plus, BadgerCare Plus Basic, and BadgerCare Plus Core programs.

Medicaid and Caretaker Supplement

IM agencies must continue to disregard federal income tax refunds, rebates, and credits as income in the month received and for 12 months following the month of receipt for the Medicaid and Caretaker Supplement programs. If there is a remaining, unspent portion of the refund after the 12-month disregard period has passed, the agency must count that portion as an available asset.

FoodShare

IM agencies must continue to disregard federal income tax refunds, rebates, and credits as income. For households that include an Elderly, Blind, or Disabled member that is over 200% of the Federal Poverty Level and subject to regular FoodShare rules, IM agencies must disregard any remaining portion of a federal income tax refund, rebate, or credit from the asset test for 12 months following the month the refund is received.

AVAILABLE TAX CREDITS

Federal and Wisconsin Earned Income Tax Credits

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC or EIC) is available to working individuals who have low or moderate income. To qualify for EITC, individuals must have earned income from employment or self-employment. When the EITC exceeds the amount of taxes owed, this results in a tax refund. To qualify, individuals must meet certain requirements and file a tax return, even if they don't owe any tax or are not required to file.

The IRS has an interactive tax assistant that assists individuals with determining if they can claim the EITC and with calculating the amount of the credit. Refer to the [IRS EITC Tax Assistant](#).

For more information on the federal EITC, refer to [IRS Publication 596](#).

For more information on the Wisconsin EIC, refer to the [Wisconsin Department of Revenue \(DOR\) website](#).

Wisconsin Homestead Credit

The Wisconsin Homestead Credit (HC) is available to low income Wisconsin residents who rent or own their home. The credit may lessen the impact of property taxes and rent on individuals with lower incomes.

The following terms apply to individuals who received a W-2 payment (Community Service Job [CSJ], W-2 Transition [W-2 T], At Risk Pregnancy [ARP], and/or Custodial Parent of an Infant [CMC]) in tax year 2012:

- If an individual received **any** amount of a W-2 payment in 2012 for any month in 2012, the individual's property taxes and rent are reduced by one-twelfth for **each** month the individual received payment; or
- If an individual received a W-2 payment for all 12 months of 2012, the individual is not eligible for the homestead credit.

Similar provisions apply to county relief, Kinship Care, and other cash public assistance payments (such as adoption assistance and federal or state disaster grants) received in tax year 2012.

For more information on the HC, refer to the [Wisconsin DOR website](#).

Federal Child Tax Credit

The Child Tax Credit (CTC) is designed to assist working families offset the cost of raising children and is available to families with a *qualifying child*. If the amount of the CTC is greater than the amount of income tax a family owes, the family may receive part or all of the difference as an Additional Child Tax Credit (ACTC).

The IRS has an interactive interview that assists families with determining if they are eligible for the CTC. Refer to the [IRS website](#).

For more information on the CTC refer to [IRS Publication 972](#).

Federal Child and Dependent Care Credit

The Child and Dependent Care Credit (CDCC) is available to families who pay work-related expenses for the care of children, adult dependents, or an incapacitated spouse. The purpose of the credit is to allow families to be gainfully employed. If a family does not earn enough money to owe federal income taxes, it cannot benefit from the credit.

For more information on the CDCC, refer to the [IRS website](#).

Federal Health Coverage Tax Credit

The Health Coverage Tax Credit (HCTC) pays 75% of qualified health insurance premiums, making health insurance more affordable for families. Families may receive the credit either monthly as their health plan premium becomes due, or yearly as a credit on their federal tax return.

For more information on the general requirements for the HCTC refer to the [IRS website](#).

Filing Taxes for Previous Years

Individuals who have never filed or have not filed their returns in past years may file for tax credit refunds for the last three years (i.e. 2009, 2010, and 2011). If applicable to their situation, they would still be eligible to receive EIC and CTC credits for those previous years.

For more information on how to file a tax return for a prior year, call the IRS Tax Help Line at 1-800-829-1040.

TAX PREPARATION RESOURCES

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program is available to low income individuals in preparing their tax returns. IRS-certified volunteers provide free basic income tax return preparation with electronic filing to qualified individuals in local communities. VITA sites are generally located at community and neighborhood centers, libraries, schools, shopping centers, churches, retirement homes, and other convenient locations. Most VITA sites are open from February 1 through April 15.

To find a VITA site, call 1-800-906-9887 or refer to the [IRS website](#).

Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE)

The Tax Counseling for the Elderly (TCE) program is available to individuals who are 60 years of age and older, specializing in questions about pensions and retirement issues unique to seniors. The American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) supports the TCE program. AARP's Tax-Aide volunteers are IRS-certified.

To find a TCE site, call 1-888-227-7669 or visit the [AARP website](#).

Fees and Commercial Tax Preparation

Some tax preparation companies offer money up-front to individuals seeking tax returns, often based only on the last paycheck of 2012. News articles indicate that some of these companies can charge very high interest (e.g. 30% up to 60%) rates and fees. As a result, individuals can lose much of the tax refund due them.

Agencies should inform participants about these types of tax preparation services and encourage participants not to sign anything without fully understanding the terms and conditions of the contract. Agencies should encourage participants to utilize VITA sites, which are free and have free electronic tax filing which can result in a speedy tax return.

ACTION REQUIRED

All W-2 and IM agencies are requested to inform program participants of the advantages of claiming available tax credits and of available free tax return preparation assistance in the community. Agencies may provide the information in any combination of methods including face-to-face contact, posting of information in customer service areas, handing out information sheets, including information in an existing mailing to the participant, and any other suitable means that will provide increased awareness to families requesting or receiving assistance.

A sample document, for use in posting in public areas and as a handout, is provided as an attachment to this Operations Memo.

NOTE: DCF completed a mass mailing of the handout to W-2 program participants in February and March 2013.

ATTACHMENT

2013 Participant Handout

CONTACTS

For Policy Questions in the Balance of State: Bureau of Regional Operations, W-2 Regional Coordinators

For Policy Questions in Milwaukee: Milwaukee Operations Section, Regional Administrators

For CARES Processing Questions: W-2 Help Desk

BEPS CARES Information & Problem Resolution Center

*Program Categories – FS – FoodShare, MA – Medicaid, BC+ – BadgerCare Plus, SC – Senior Care, CTS – Caretaker Supplement, CC – Child Care, W-2 – Wisconsin Works, FSET – FoodShare Employment and Training, CF – Children First, EA – Emergency Assistance, JAL – Job Access Loan, JC – Job Center Programs, RAP – Refugee Assistance Program, WIA – Workforce Investment Act, *Other EP – Other Employment Programs.

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